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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted by Mesa (Arizona) Community College (MCC) to obtain and analyze information from employers of former MCC students regarding the performance, skills, and attitudes of former students; job outlook; assessment of MCC training; and source of hiring. Study findings included the following: (1) employers gave the highest ratings to occupational students' willingness to learn, work attitude, and compliance with employers' policies, and the lowest ratings to problem-solving skills, communication skills, and mathematics skills; (2) for academic students, the highest ratings were given to work attendance, accepting responsibility, and work attitude, while the lowest ratings were given to problem-solving skills, organizational ability, mathematics skills, and technical knowledge; (3) employers gave higher ratings to the training received by occupational students than that received by academic students; (4) overall, employers rated the future job outlook in their field the same as the current job outlook; (5) 85% of the employers who felt that they had a basis for comparison indicated that MCC graduates were better prepared than employees of the same work group without such training; (6) 65% indicated that MCC training had added to the student's potential for job placement or job advancement; and (7) 67% indicated that the source of hiring was the student's own initiative. Uses for the study data are recommended. (LAL)

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RESEARCH REPORT

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Employer Follow-Up
Spring 1986

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Employer Follow-up
Spring 1986

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September 1986

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Mesa Community College
Employer Follow-up

The contents of this report contains an analysis of survey information obtained from employers of former students who attended Mesa Community College. One should understand that such data is a reliable source of information from employers completing the survey form. Also, one should remember that such information reports on what has already happened and usually does not provide answers to the cause or reason for the occurrence. For this reason, sections of this report seek to highlight some areas which may need to respond to some of the findings of the survey. This document is divided in the the below sections:

* Some Highlights

* Suggested Uses of the Data

* What does our data say about:

- In what areas did the employers give us the lowest ratings?
- In what areas did the employers give us the highest ratings?
- How did the employers' ratings compare in terms of occupational and academic students?
- How did the employers rate the job outlook for students in the various areas of training?
- What comments did the employers have for us?
- How did the employers rate our students in comparison with other employees who did not receive the same type of training?
- How did the employers feel about the training received by the students in terms of job advancement?
- What was the source of hiring of our former students?

* So what now .....

This project was directed by Dr. J. Joaquin Montemayor, Director of the Office of Research and Development at Mesa Community College with assistance from Ms. Karen Hardin. Dr. Jim Reed, Director of Tex-SIS Services in Corsicana, Texas provided questionnaires, computer processing, and analyst services for the project. The members of the survey team wish to express their appreciation to the administrators and staff of Mesa Community College for their support. A special thanks also goes to the students and employers taking the time to respond to the survey forms. Additional information concerning this report can be obtained by contacting the Office of Research and Development at Mesa Community College.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS

Employers gave highest ratings to occupational students' willingness to learn, work attitude, and compliance with employers' policies. Lowest ratings were given to problem solving skills, communication skills, and math skills.

Overall, employers responded with higher ratings to the training received by occupational students than for academic students.

Overall, employers rated the future job outlook for the occupational programs the same as the current job outlook. The one obvious exception was in the field of Nursing - where employers gave a lower rating to the future job outlook than for the current job outlook.

Overall, employers gave high ratings to student characteristics in almost all areas. The Administration of Justice program received the highest overall rating of the various occupational programs.

SUGGESTED USES OF THE DATA

In addition to college evaluative data, survey results produce excellent opportunities for presentations to groups and sharing of information. The production of such data involves much time and effort to be exerted by institutional staff - and the information should be put to work as soon as possible. Some examples of how this type of outcome information might be put to use are:

1. Basis for making requests to institutional staff to respond in writing to issues raised by the data.

2. Verbal presentations to instructional and student services administrators, department chairpeople, directors, and program coordinators.

3. Release of public relations information to the public through the local newspaper(s).

4. Reports to accreditation teams.

5. Release of public relations information to the student body through the campus newspaper.

6. Release of data to institutional staff through the use of faculty/administrator campus newsletter.

7. Marketing and recruitment efforts through analyses of target populations.

8. Verbal presentation to college President and/or Administrative Cabinet.

9. Verbal presentation to college governing body.

10. Treatment of special concerns unique to the college's institutional environment.

11. Identification of populations needing special types of support services.

12. Fulfillment of state vocational reporting requirements.

13. Longitudinal employer follow-up analyses over a 3 to 5 year period of time.

14. Release of special brochures to employers advertising the college's services.

15. Use of positive employer comments in public relations and recruitment publications.

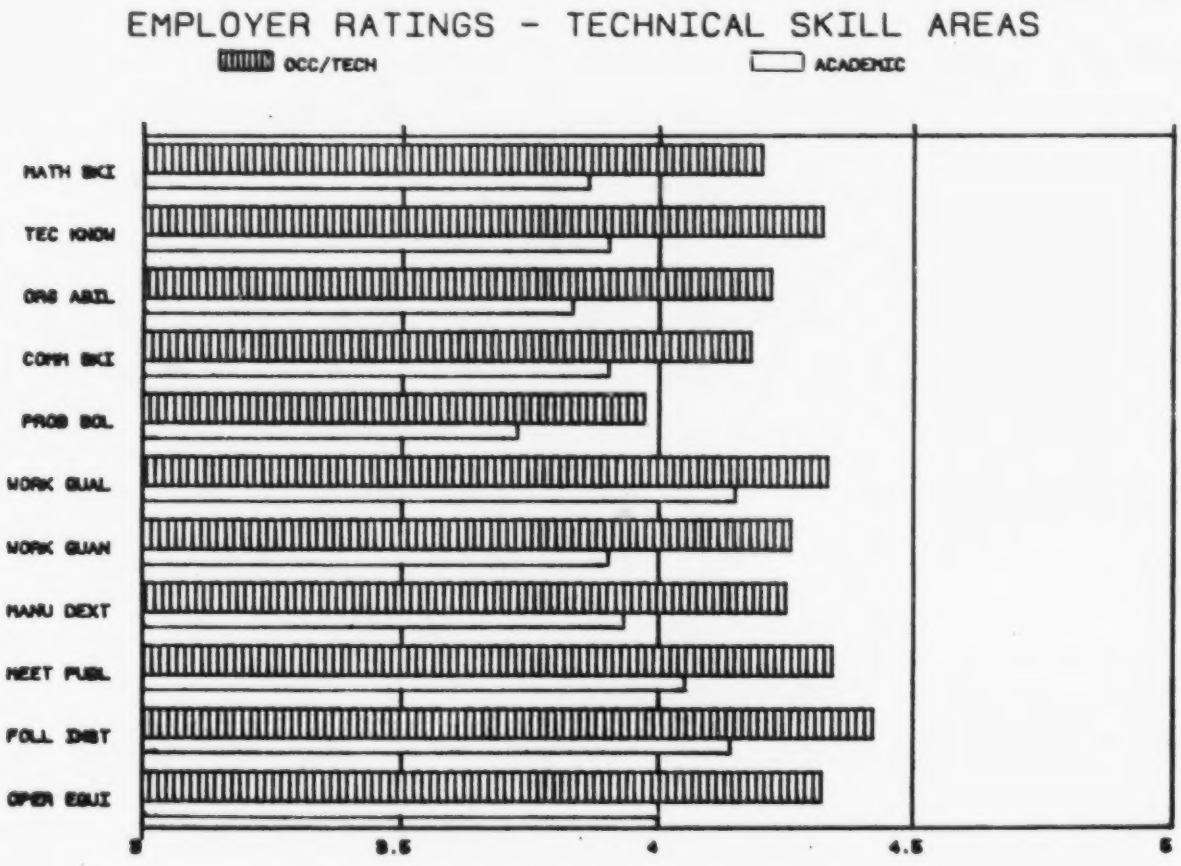
WHAT DID OUR DATA SAY ABOUT .....

IN WHAT AREAS DID THE EMPLOYERS GIVE US THE LOWEST RATINGS?

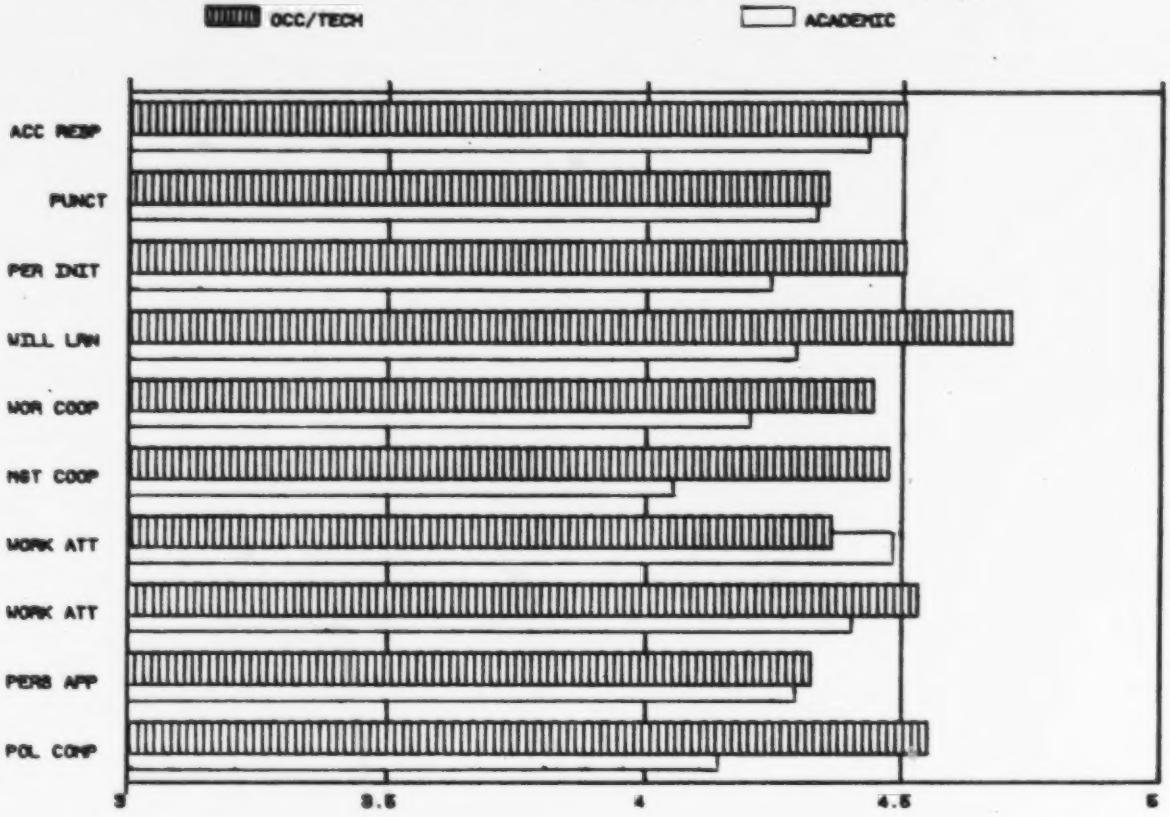
As compared with other studies of this type, the employers gave high overall ratings to the training received by the students. Of the technical and personal skill areas rated by the employers, the four lowest ratings for occupational students were given to problem solving skills, communication skills, math skills, and organizational ability. The four lowest ratings given to academic students were problem solving skills, organizational ability, math skills, and technical knowledge.

IN WHAT AREAS DID THE EMPLOYERS GIVE US THE HIGHEST RATINGS?

Overall, the employers gave the highest ratings (for occupational students) to our students' willingness to learn, compliance with employer policies, and work attitude. For academic students, the highest ratings were given to work attendance, accepting responsibility, and work attitude.



EMPLOYER RATINGS - PERSONAL SKILL AREAS



HOW DID THE EMPLOYERS' RATINGS COMPARE IN TERMS OF OCCUPATIONAL AND ACADEMIC STUDENTS?

In almost all categories, the training received by the occupational students received higher ratings than for academic students. The highest rating for occupational students was given to "willingness to learn" - the lowest given to "problem solving". For academic students, the highest rating was given to "work attendance" - the lowest given to "problem solving".

HOW DID THE EMPLOYERS RATE THE JOB OUTLOOK FOR STUDENTS IN THE VARIOUS AREAS OF TRAINING?

Overall, employers rated the future job outlook the same as the current job outlook. When the data is reviewed on a program by program basis, the below is seen:

Program	Current	Future
Accounting	3.75	3.75
Administration of Justice	3.83	4.00
Electronics Technology	4.00	4.00
Mid-Management	3.50	4.00
Nursing	4.57	4.25

WHAT COMMENTS DID THE EMPLOYERS HAVE FOR US?

The employer questionnaire solicited comments from the employers relative to suggestions for improving the technical or personal skills of the students and also additional areas of training in which our college should become involved. Shown below are some of these comments.

Need better communication skills with management - understanding more about the way a business works and how it succeeds.

More lab/computer hands on training - especially understanding how to make theory work in the lab.

Need better preparation in job interviews.

Need more training in the area of problem solving both systematically and on a personal basis.

More specialized training needed within the realm of the person's anticipated employment.

Our firm does primarily school construction, therefore we need people with an extensive background in state regulations for design.

Time in the position will help with leadership skills.

Need mandatory course requirement for interpersonal relationship - should include importance of appearance, courtesy, and responsibility.

Consider both oral and written english skills.

Need higher math skills for electronic courses.

The Administration of Justice program at Mesa needs to add many more class offerings and to also offer a commercial security program. Classes such as community relations, accident investigation, sex crimes investigation, death investigation are not offered.

There is no career ladder in the field of safety/security within the MCCCD. There is no place for these people to go regardless of their training. It is my opinion the career ladder needs to be looked into immediately.

Technical, theoretical training is fine, but exposure to the practical, in this case, semiconductor field, helps considerably.

Need more emphasis on communication skills, both verbal and written.

More "on the job" training with hands-on experience. Too little time spent with floor nursing .....

Overall I find the students from your program better prepared than students from other two year programs. However, I think organization and prioritization skills need to be developed to decrease "reality shock" when entering the job market.

Need more emphasis on accuracy in typing and excellent work product. More feedback to students regarding their assets and deficiencies, identifying and working on improvement in weak areas.

Legal secretaries are much needed. However, training must be intense and reality-based (i.e. based on actual skills needed and work to be done - and understanding of the law and courts).

Emphasis on communication and CIS.

Include more I.V. Therapy training.

Continue offering courses covering theory, R.F., digital, power, and computers.

Need coursework in use of test equipment for measurements. Also, computer languages, digital, and R.F. theory.

Pharmacology/math application could be improved.

More experience with team leading, management issues to aid in problem-solving, delegating, etc.

Make curriculum as true to life as possible.

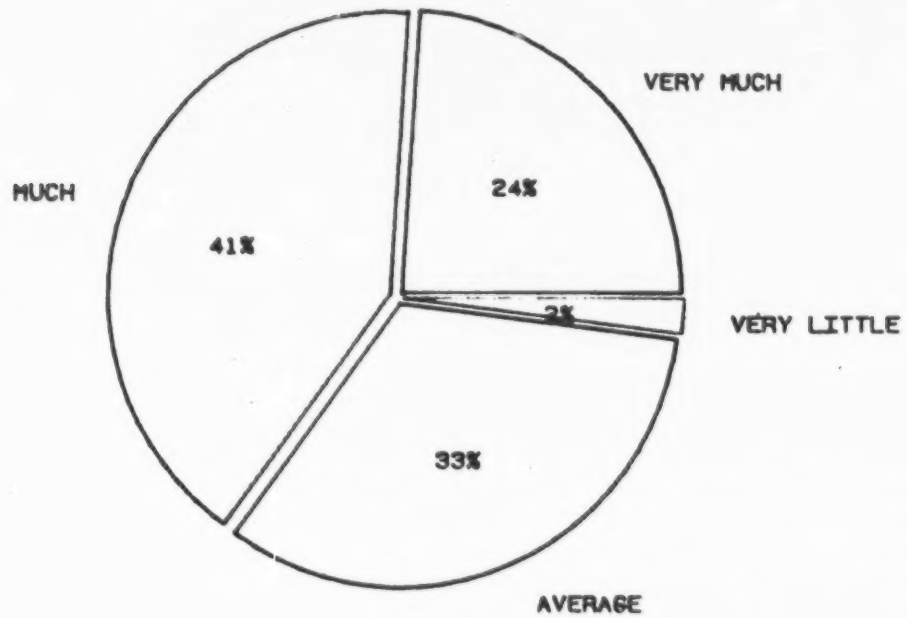
HOW DID THE EMPLOYERS RATE OUR STUDENTS IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER EMPLOYEES WHO DID NOT RECEIVE THE SAME TYPE OF TRAINING?

Of those employers who indicated that they had a basis for comparison, 85% said the student was better prepared than other employees of the same work group who did not receive such training.

HOW DID THE EMPLOYERS FEEL ABOUT THE TRAINING RECEIVED BY THE STUDENTS IN TERMS OF JOB ADVANCEMENT?

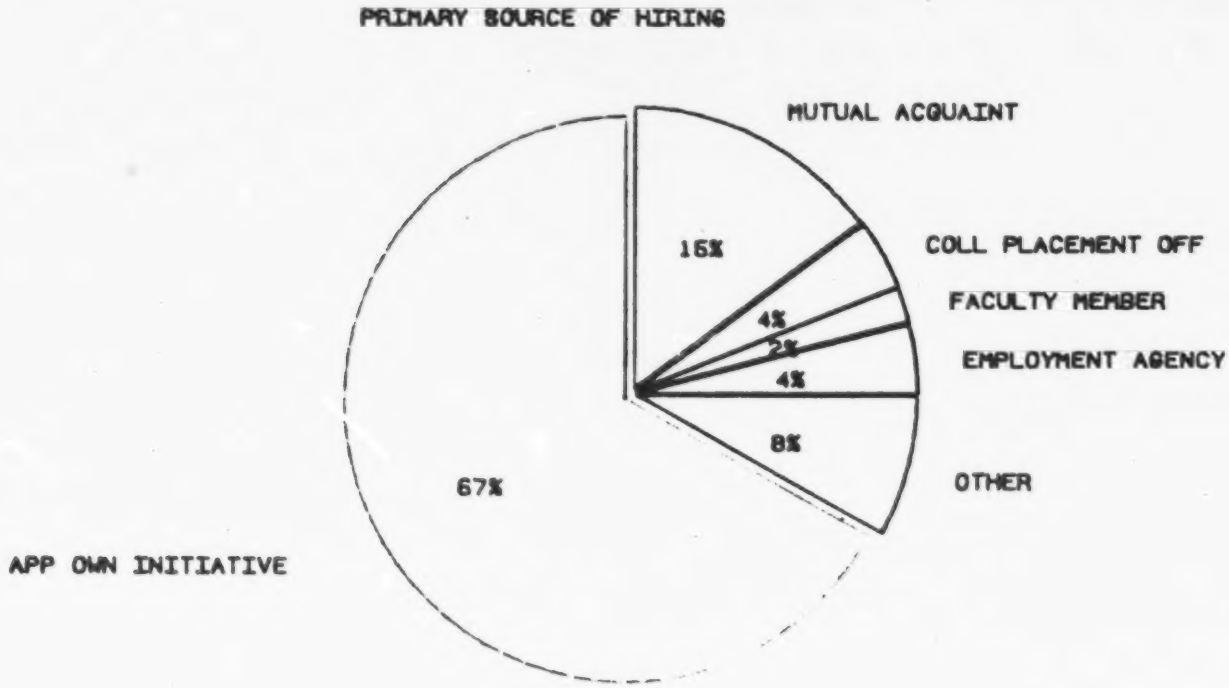
65% of the employers indicated that the training received had added much or very much to the student's ability for job placement and advancement. 2% indicated that the training added little to that ability.

TRAINING ADDED TO ADVANCEMENT ABILITY



WHAT WAS THE SOURCE OF HIRING OF OUR FORMER STUDENTS?

As shown on the following chart, about two out of every three employers perceived that the source of hiring was through the applicant's own initiative. 15% indicated that the source was through a mutual acquaintance; 4% indicated the college job placement office; and 2% indicated a college faculty member to be the source of hiring.



SO WHAT NOW .....

Although the employers gave high ratings to almost all areas, the lowest ratings were given to problem solving skills, communication skills, and math skills. Is this an area which could use improvement and, if so, what enhancments could be implemented by the college?

The field of Nursing was given a lower future job outlook rating than current job outlook. Is this an area of concern and, if so, how should the college react to such information?

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges

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